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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0437

INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE

RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

RUEAWJB/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 000951

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STATE FOR EAP/MTS, EAP/RSP, G/TIP, INL, DRL/ILCSR
LABOR FOR ILAB

JUSTICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND CRIMINAL DIVISIONS

STATE PASS TO USAID

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM KCRM KWMN ELAB RP

SUBJECT: STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING
IN PERSONS

REF: A. MANILA 539 (2008 TIP REPORT)

1B. MANILA 333 (ANTI-TIP EFFORTS IN MINDANAO)

1C. 07 MANILA 2405 (AMBASSADOR BREAKS GROUND ON TWO
SHELTERS)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On April 10, the Deputy Chief of Mission joined NGO and government partners to inaugurate a newly constructed halfway house for trafficking in persons victims at Manila's North Harbor. The modern shelter, which replaced an earlier one built in 2001, can accommodate at least 30 trafficking victims at a time. In addition to this shelter, the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) also completed construction in April of two other halfway houses at the ports in Iloilo in western Visayas and Surigao in northeastern Mindanao. These shelters are the result of a successful partnership between the Ports Authority and the Visayan Forum Foundation (VFF), a local NGO that oversees and manages shelter operations at seven ports around the country.

In order to improve outreach and victim services at its halfway houses, VFF sought out private partnerships as well. VFF recently collaborated with international advertising firm Ogilvy and Microsoft's Philippines office to intensify anti-trafficking outreach and prevention efforts. A recent \$1 million award to VFF from eBay founder Jeff Skoll's charitable foundation is yet another partnership to ensure the continuation of VFF's exemplary efforts to combat trafficking in the Philippines. END SUMMARY.

Expanding Anti-Trafficking Partnerships at the Ports

12. (U) DCM joined Visayan Forum Foundation Executive Board Chairman Joaquin Garaygay, Philippine Ports Authority General Manager Oscar Sevilla, and a group of media, government, private industry, and NGO representatives to commemorate the opening of a new, larger halfway house for trafficking in persons victims at Manila's North Harbor, the largest port facility in the Philippines. This shelter will replace an earlier center built in 2001 and will accommodate a larger number of trafficking victims and potential victims intercepted at the port. The PPA constructed the facility with its own funds, while VFF will oversee and manage the shelter's daily operations. In his keynote address, the DCM applauded PPA, VFF, shipping companies, and port police for this milestone in a highly-productive partnership.

13. (U) The partnership between VFF and PPA dates back to 1999, when PPA agreed to construct the first halfway house

for victims and potential victims of trafficking at Manila's North Harbor. VFF and PPA opened the doors of the Port Halfway House on July 11, 2001. In recent years, as the capacity of VFF and its port partners to identify trafficking victims increased, the needs of the North Harbor shelter outgrew the original facility. On July 7, 2007, Ambassador joined Ms. Flores-Oebanda and PPA General Manager Sevilla to break ground on this new, larger shelter (ref C). Now fully operational, the new two-story shelter can accommodate approximately 30 victims at any given time and includes a conference room for training sessions and meetings. The halfway house will continue to be a center for information-sharing and advocacy against trafficking, as well as a sanctuary for thousands of victims intercepted each year.

Reaching More and More Victims

¶4. (U) In addition to the Manila halfway house, PPA also opened two other halfway houses in April -- one at the port in Surigao in northeastern Mindanao and a second at the port in Iloilo in western Visayas. VFF now manages a total of seven halfway houses at ports throughout the country (Batangas, Davao, Iloilo, Manila, Sorsogon, Surigao, and Zamboanga). The Manila International Airport Authority is also constructing a VFF halfway house that will serve victims at Manila's airport. Since 2001, VFF has rescued and provided assistance to more than 32,000 victims and potential victims of trafficking and has helped to file 66 trafficking cases in court on behalf of 166 victims.

NGOs Engage the Private Sector to Combat TIP

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¶5. (U) On March 27, the Skoll Foundation, led by eBay founder Jeff Skoll, awarded \$1 million to VFF President and Executive Director Cecilia Flores-Oebanda for "social entrepreneurship" achievements. The Skoll Awards for Social Entrepreneurship recognize models for sustainable social change that have yielded significant impact. Former President Jimmy Carter and Jeff Skoll presented the award to Oebanda at the fifth annual Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship in Oxford, England. The \$1 million award to VFF will be an unrestricted three-year grant that will enable VFF to amplify its anti-TIP efforts throughout the country.

¶6. (SBU) VFF plans to devote a significant portion of the Skoll Award to a national public awareness campaign against trafficking. Oebanda believes that while there has been several public awareness initiatives in the past, these campaigns have lacked the national reach to benefit parts of the country where potential victims are most vulnerable. Advertising giant Ogilvy International has agreed to provide pro-bono services to VFF for the awareness campaign and has begun designing and creating print, radio, internet, and television anti-trafficking spots for VFF. VFF and Ogilvy hope to launch the initiative later this year, in partnership with major media outlets throughout the country.

¶7. (U) VFF also recently announced a renewal of its private partnership with Microsoft Philippines to provide information technology skills training to victims of trafficking at VFF shelters and other community centers throughout the country. The project, entitled "Stop Trafficking and Exploitation of People through Unlimited Potential" (STEP-UP), began in 2006 and was VFF's first partnership with the private sector. Instructors teach technology skills to young men, women, and children at three of VFF's shelters in Manila, Batangas, and Davao, in addition to ten other community learning centers managed by VFF's NGO partners in other parts of the country. The computer skills training complements VFF's other counseling and support services. During the first two years

of the STEP-UP project, more than 5,000 victims and potential victims attended Microsoft's skills training seminars throughout the country. The project hopes to reach its target of 10,000 trainees within the next two years.

¶8. (U) The STEP-UP project is the latest in a series of partnerships by Microsoft Philippines to provide technology skills training to under-served Filipinos through community-based organizations. Microsoft also partnered with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) to establish computer training centers in Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, and other cities with high concentrations of overseas Filipino workers. The Microsoft-OWWA programs target lower-skilled workers, including household service workers, to improve opportunities for employment upon their return to the Philippines.

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